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PURITAN INFLUENCE IN WISCONSIN

BY

ELLIS B. USHER

Editor of "The La Crosse Chronicle"

[From Proceedings of The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1898]

MADISON
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN
1899

PURITAN INFLUENCE IN WISCONSIN.[1]

BY ELLIS B. USHER.

In 1876 the late George William Curtis began an address before the New England Society of New York by recalling the remark, attributed by Izaak Walton to Dr. Botelier, "that doubtless God might have made a better berry than the strawberry, but doubtless he never did," with the application that "doubtless there might have been a better place to be born in than New England, but doubtless no such place exists."

In the same happy vein he said:

"The Mayflower, sir, brought seed, not a harvest. In a century and a half the religious restrictions of the Puritans had grown into absolute religious liberty, and in two centuries it had burst beyond the limits of New England, and John Carver of the Mayflower had ripened into Abraham Lincoln of the Illinois prairie."

This is the historical epitome of the settlement of the West. The fact, also alluded to by Mr. Curtis, that every American is a "Yankee" to the European, is the wide testimonial and acknowledgment of the pregnant Puritan influence upon our national character.

The tendency of emigration to follow latitude in the westward march of empire has been noticed and commented upon, as applying quite as well to emigrants of American birth as to those who come here from the old world. Perhaps there is no more marked illustration of this natural tendency than the westward movement of the Puritan stock.

The Northern Yankee from Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont has followed the pine trees from New York to Puget

[1]Address delivered before the State Historical Convention, at Madison, February 22, 1899.

Sound. The Connecticut and Massachusetts Yankees followed the Connecticut grant, scattering through Northern Pennsylvania and Southern New York to some extent, but making their main lodgment with General Cleveland and his successors, in the "Western Reserve" of Ohio. This emigration extended to Iowa, and was to some extent diverted below its normal line by the anti-slavery troubles of Kansas.

In these general statements I think there is enough of truth to furnish suggestions for the lover of investigation. It is not the purpose of this paper to go into their merits. But the influence of this emigration is so apparent that I am tempted to deal with its manifestations in a State where it has hitherto attracted little attention — the State of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin, two years after its admission to the Union, in 1850, contained but 305,391 people. In 1860 it had grown to 755,881. This increase was largely due to foreign immigration, and of the 91,000 troops sent to the field during the war for the union, more than fifty per cent would, I think, be found to have been foreign born. Foreign blood has dominated the population from the beginning of her statehood, and the census of 1890 shows that of Wisconsin's 1,686,880 people, 74.14 per cent have one or both parents who were born aliens, 25.86 per cent are native born with native parents, and more than half the voters are still aliens by birth. In this foreign blood the Teutonic predominates, the major part of it is German, and, as our free institutions are a development from the spirit of the old frei-mark of Germany, and the Hanseatic cities, we find that no foreigner makes a more jealous and independent free-man than the German immigrant.

The average New Englander is likely to raise his eyebrows at this statement of the strength of our foreign-born element, for he is quite often oblivious to the fact that Boston has a bigger Irish population than Dublin, and that Massachusetts, according to the census of 1890, had 29.35 per cent of foreigners while Wisconsin had but 30.75 per cent. The difference is mainly to be found in the "native born" population. The great majority of the natives in Wisconsin are of the first and second generations in descent from foreign immigrants. Not to ex-

ceed 15,000 such natives could trace an ancestry in this country, reaching to or back of the revolutionary period, without admixture of foreign blood.

This is the fact that is most astonishing in this examination, and it is quite remarkable, in this aspect of the growth of the State, to find the great influence that the little leaven of Puritan blood has exerted from the very beginning.

Thinking that this testimony to the strength and endurance of the most American of American influences may be of use and value, as well as of interest, I have been tempted into writing this paper, more with the hope that the subject may prove inviting to some more capable hand, than with the expectation that I can here do it justice.

There were two constitutional conventions held in Wisconsin Territory. The first, whose constitution was rejected, held in 1846, contained 134 delegates. Of those delegates twenty-nine were known to be New England men, and ten others were of New England parentage, and of the forty-two natives of New York, who were then and have ever since been numerically strong and dominant, there were many names that suggest Puritan origin. In the second constitutional convention held in 1847, there were sixty-nine delegates; twenty-four of these were from New England and five were known to be of New England parentage. Of the thirty-two men who were members of these conventions, who held positions of prominence, fourteen were of New England birth or stock. Brief mention of them will be of interest.

Louis Powell Harvey, a member of the convention of 1847, was born in East Haddam, Conn. His family early joined the movement to the Western Reserve, where Louis got part of a college education at the Western Reserve College, at Hudson. In 1841 he located in what is now Kenosha, Wisconsin, and opened a school; then edited a Whig paper, and was postmaster of the place under President Tyler. Afterwards he lived in Clinton, then settled in Waterloo, whence he served two terms in the state senate, one term as secretary of state, was a regent of the state university and, in 1861, was elected governor. He had served only about four months as governor when he was

drowned by accidentally falling from a steamboat deck into the Tennessee river at Savannah. He had gone South to look after the welfare of the Wisconsin troops. His untimely end interrupted a most useful and promising career.

Harrison Reed, of Littlefield, Mass., one of the early editors of the State, was governor of Florida five years, 1868–73, and held minor public positions.

The most distinguished career was that of Alexander W. Randall, a native of New York, but the son of Phineas Randall, of Massachusetts. He was twenty-seven, in 1846, when he was elected to the constitutional convention. He distinguished himself there by introducing a resolution requiring the question of colored suffrage to be separately submitted to vote of the people. The resolution was adopted after an exciting debate, by a vote of fifty-three to forty-six. Mr. Randall served part of a term as circuit judge. He was governor of the State four years, 1858 to 1862, and was most efficient in raising troops early in the war. In 1862 he was appointed minister to Rome. Resigning in 1863 he sought a military appointment, but was induced by the president to accept the position of assistant postmaster general, which he filled until 1865, when he was made postmaster general.

Experience Estabrook, a native of New Hampshire, was attorney general of the State.

Wm. M. Denis, of Rhode Island, was State bank comptroller.

Edward V. Whiton, of Revolutionary stock, born in Lee, Massachusetts, served several terms in the territorial legislature and was a member of the judiciary committee of the first convention. He was elected a circuit judge immediately after the adoption of the constitution; the circuit judges sitting together *en banc* then constituted the supreme court, over which he for a season presided. When the separate organization of the supreme court was made, in 1852, he was elected chief justice, which position he filled with great ability and dignity until his death in 1859.

George Gale, a native of Vermont, held minor positions and served nine years as circuit judge. He helped organize Trempealeau county and founded the village of Galesville, and Gale

College, for which he left an endowment of $10,000. He wrote a book on the "Upper Mississippi" that is already one of the rare and sought for books of Americana.

J. Allen Barber, of Vermont, served one term in the territorial legislature and five since the State organized. In 1863 he was speaker. He served two terms in the State senate, and two terms as representative in congress.

John H. Tweedy, a native of Connecticut, was a delegate in congress.

Frederick S. Lovell, of Vermont, was a colonel of volunteers.

The natives of New York who were of New England ancestry held positions as follows:

Charles H. Larrabee was a congressman, circuit judge, and colonel of volunteers.

A. Hyatt Smith and George B. Smith were attorneys general.

Eleazer Root was the State's first superintendent of public instruction. He was of Connecticut ancestry.

To go on with this investigation from the members of the constitutional convention to the men of prominence in the later development of the State, it is apparent that the activity and force of this New England element in public affairs has been maintained with a record quite disproportionate to the smallness of its numbers, as compared with the rest of our population.

To look over our list of governors, who, including Gov. Edward Scofield, number eighteen, one is first struck with the fact that the only aliens by birth who have ever held the office were Lieut. Gov. Arthur McArthur, a Scotchman, who served four days in 1856, during a contest between rival claimants for the office; Edward Salomon, a German, who was not elected to the office but succeeded to it from the lieutenant governorship upon the death of Governor Harvey, and Gov. William E. Smith, a Scotchman, the only foreign-born citizen who ever held the office by election.

The list, in order, with nativity, is as follows:

Nelson Dewey	1848–1852	Connecticut
Leonard J. Farwell	1852–1854	New York
Wm. A. Barstow	1854–1856	Connecticut
Arthur McArthur	1856–4 days	Scotland

Coles Bashford	1856–1858	New York
Alex. W. Randall	1858–1862	New York
Louis P. Harvey	1862–3 mos.	Connecticut
Edward Salomon	April, 1862–1864	Germany
James T. Lewis	1864–1866	New York
Lucius Fairchild	1866–1872	Ohio
C. C. Washburn	1872–1874	Maine
Wm. R. Taylor	1874–1876	Connecticut
Harrison Ludington	1876–1878	New York
Wm. E. Smith	1878–1882	Scotland
Jeremiah M. Rusk	1882–1889	Ohio
Wm. D. Hoard	1889–1891	New York
George W. Peck	1891–1895	New York
Wm. H. Upham	1895–1897	Massachusetts
Edward Scofield	1897–	Pennsylvania

Beginning with Governor Dewey, who was born in the "Nutmeg State," five of the eighteen were New England men by birth, while Governor Fairchild, who had a distinguished civil and military career, was born of Massachusetts parents. He was Consul to Liverpool, Minister to Spain, National Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, and also of the Loyal Legion.

Governor Rusk's name suggests the Yankee filtered through the Western Reserve.

Randall and Peck are known to have a like origin, and other names suggest the same lineage.

Of all these men, probably the ablest and the most distinguished was Cadwallader Colden Washburn, who was one of a remarkable family, three brothers of which simultaneously represented three different States in congress for several terms during the civil war, and a younger brother has since been United States senator. He settled in Wisconsin in 1842, at Mineral Point, where he formed a partnership with Cyrus Woodman, also a native of Maine, that lasted for eleven years, and laid the ground-work for large fortunes for both of them. They practiced law to some extent, but the development of the country drew them into the land and banking business and resulted

in a large ownership of pine in Northern Wisconsin, that later grew to great value. Mr. Washburn was elected to congress in 1854 and this partnership was dissolved, though the two men were forever after devoted friends and frequently interested in each other's enterprises. Mr. Washburn served five terms in congress, and his civil career was supplemented by three years' service in the army, most of the time with the rank of major general. His business operations after the war were mainly devoted to his large flouring industry at Minneapolis, though he retained his Wisconsin residence and interest in lumbering to the last. He was a man of large abilities, great force and perfect rectitude.

It is a notable fact that in the supreme court the two justices who were of foreign birth, both of them jurists of great ability, James G. Ryan and Samuel Crawford, were natives of Ireland, and that notwithstanding our large preponderance of German blood, it has made few conspicuous successes in the law. The State has never had a justice of the supreme court, nor, until recently, a circuit judge of German birth.

Like the list of governors, the list of justices of the supreme court begins with a New England name, to which I have already alluded, Chief Justice Whiton. Luther S. Dixon, a native of Vermont, was another distinguished chief justice. These and Jason Downer, also a Vermonter, are the only New England men who have been justices since the separate court was organized, until the recent appointment of Justice Dodge; but New York, which has furnished ten of the seventeen, has several to her credit who must go to New England for a pedigree.

The same conditions obtain as to the circuit bench, where New York has continued to furnish a large share of the judges, as such names as Doolittle, Larrabee and Wentworth would plainly suggest.

Of the men of New England birth who have occupied the circuit bench, Timothy O. Howe, his nephew James H. Howe, and G. W. Washburn, all of Maine; Wyman Spooner, of Massachusetts; L. S. Dixon, George Gale, George W. Cate and O. B. Wyman, of Vermont, are the principal names. Of these

James H. Howe, who was also a United States district judge, Luther S. Dixon, Wyman Spooner, and George W. Cate would easily lead the list.

Wisconsin has had, including the present incumbents, eleven United States senators whose average of ability and influence has been remarkably high. Four of these men, Charles Durkee, Mathew Hale Carpenter, Philetus Sawyer and William Freeman Vilas, were natives of Vermont; Timothy O. Howe, already alluded to, was from Maine; Mr. Doolittle's ancestry runs back to Connecticut; John C. Spooner's father was born in Massachusetts, though he was himself born in the Western Reserve, and John L. Mitchell's mother is a native of Massachusetts.

Throughout the field of public life the Yankee and his descendants have held this prestige. I find them among the State superintendents of schools, as witness the names of Josiah L. Pickard, Edward Searing, Lyman C. Draper, Wm. C. Whitford, Jesse B. Thayer and John Q. Emery; while a suggestion of the source of our educational inspiration is found in the names of the Rev. A. L. Chapin, of Beloit College; Rev. William Harkness Sampson, of Lawrence University; Amos A. Lawrence, of Boston, who endowed the university that bears his name; Edward Cooke, of Boston, its first president; Rev. J. W. Walcott, president of Ripon College in 1853; Rev. C. Whitford, president of Milton College; Simeon Mills, who, as one of the first regents, bought the site and superintended the erection of the first building for the State University; John H. Lathrop, first chancellor, Henry Barnard, the second chancellor, the Rev. John Bascom and the present incumbent, Charles Kendall Adams, of its later presidents, and many other men of New England origin, have had great influence in this field.

It is an interesting fact that when the civil war began in 1861, the roster of every early regiment, and the names on every early subscription paper, bore testimony to the patriotism of the descendants of the Pilgrims, and among the Wisconsin men who won distinction in the field they bore a noble part. Of the commanders of the famous "Iron Brigade," General Lysander Cutler was a native of Massachusetts, while General Edward S.

Bragg, who has since served in congress and made a national reputation in civil life, is the grandson of a man who fought under the stern old fellow who said, at Bennington, that he would win the fight or leave Molly Stark a widow. General Fairchild's ancestry is in Massachusetts, and General John A. Kellogg's in Connecticut. This brief allusion to a most distinguished command is typical of the Wisconsin record in that war.

In special fields, two of Wisconsin's most famous citizens, Lyman C. Draper and Increase A. Lapham, are to be counted among the descendants of New England. The former helped to form the school system of the State and did a wonderful work in making the Wisconsin State Historical Society one of the greatest depositories of Americana in this country, a shrine that every historian of the West must visit. The latter, as a geologist and student of anthropology, gave an early impulse to the study of the natural wonders of the State and left enduring monuments to his own patient research.

From the days of 1767, when John Carver of Connecticut first put Yankee foot on Wisconsin soil, the forests have been the temptation to many of the new Pilgrims from the East. Every township of pine in the State will bear testimony to their visitations. At Green Bay the first lumberman (1827) was Col. Ebenezer Childs.

Daniel Whitney was the first man to invade the pine forests of the Wisconsin river in 1827-8. H. S. Allen, a Maine Yankee, was sawing lumber in Dunn county in 1835. And the long line of New England names has many who have been known in other fields: Philetus Sawyer, C. C. Washburn and Daniel Wells, Jr., served in congress, while the Cranes and Libbys of Oshkosh; the Shaws, Randalls, Marstons, and Eastons, Eau Claire; Hixons, Colmans, Pettibones, Holways, Bussells, Withees, La Crosse, and dozens of other prominent names to be found in every lumber district of the State, attest the activity and success of the New Englander in this chosen field of industrial enterprise.

Among the merchants and manufacturers of Milwaukee, the metropolis of the State, T. A. Chapman, of Maine, amassed a fortune and led the trade in dry goods.

Edward P. Allis, of Massachusetts, led not merely the State, but the Northwest, in the manufacture of steam engines and mill and other machinery; while such men as J. H. Mead (Vermont), of Sheboygan, banker and manufacturer; Abel Keyes (Vermont), lumberman and miner of Menasha: Lucius Blake (Vermont), manufacturer, of Racine; Arabut Ludlow (Vermont), of Monroe, banker and businessman; Rufus B. Kellogg (Massachusetts), banker, Oshkosh and Green Bay; Augustus Ledyard Smith (Connecticut), Appleton; H. H. West (Connecticut), and Levi H. Kellogg, L. A. Wheeler (Vermont), Charles H. Larkin (Connecticut), Abner Kirby (Maine), and Franklin J. Blair (Massachusetts), prominent Milwaukee merchants, suggest the general diffusion of the enterprising Yankee throughout all the pioneer mercantile enterprises.

In another important field of development, that of railroads, New England blood has been much in evidence. In the early days of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railway, Byron Kilbourn of Connecticut, and E. D. Holton of New Hampshire, were leading spirits. S. S. Merrill, who came to be its general manager, was another New Hampshire man, as was his assistant, H. C. Atkins. Wm. R. Sill one of the early chief engineers, and his assistant H. I. Bliss, were both from Connecticut. H. C. Dodge, one of the later engineers, was from Connecticut, and Don J. Whittemore, the present chief engineer, was born in Vermont. John Catlin, who was one of the moving spirits, and president of the Milwaukee & Mississippi road, the present Prairie du Chien division of the C., M. & St. P. road, was a Vermonter. Perry H. Smith, James H. Howe, and other leading spirits of the Chicago & Northwestern system, were likewise from the East. David M. Kelley, of Massachusetts, built the Green Bay road; D. A. Baldwin, H. H. Porter (Maine), John C. Spooner and Edwin E. Woodman, a descendant of Edward Woodman, of Newbury, Mass., are among the leading names of the Omaha system, while the Wisconsin Central was built by Gardiner Colby, his son Charles L., and the Abbots, all Yankees.

In no field has the influence of New England been more potent in forming Wisconsin than in the press. Among the pioneer editors are General Rufus King (Massachusetts an-

cestry, father of Brig. Gen. Chas. King, soldier and writer), General Albert G. Ellis (Massachusetts stock), C. C. Sholes, his brother Charles Latham Sholes (Connecticut), Daniel W. Ballou (Vermont), Maj. L. H. Drury (Vermont), Sterling P. Rounds (Vermont), Henry Leach Devereaux (Massachusetts), Chas. S. Benton (Maine), Chas. Seymour (Vermont), Harrison Reed (Massachusetts), David Atwood (New Hampshire), George H. Paul (Vermont), Levi Alden (Vermont), and a host of others, are on this roll. General Ellis started the first Wisconsin newspaper at Green Bay, in 1822.

The ministers among the pioneers were many of them of New England stock or ancestry. The names of Cutting Marsh, Brunson, Irish, Colman, Chapin, Sherwin, Clapp, Goodenough, McClellan and Kidder, are a suggestive supplement to those already mentioned among the promoters of the schools and colleges.

There is no need to multiply names or suggest fields for investigation. The Yankee was a pioneer in every part of Wisconsin. He has linked his name with every important industry, except that of brewing, and with every section of the State. Though few in numbers, the New England men have been a potent factor in shaping this commonwealth, and however the foreign blood has or may predominate, theirs is the pattern that has been set and must be followed.

It has sometimes been a matter of wonder that Wisconsin, so overwhelmingly foreign in its population, should be so distinctively American in all its institutions of government, in its educational impulse and its progress. I have endeavored to solve the question in these inquiries, incomplete and hasty as I have been compelled to make them. Wisconsin institutions have been dominated by Americans of the Puritan seed from the beginning.

In this exposition of what will to some be a new idea as to the dominant influence in the upbuilding of this great commonwealth, there has been no intention or desire to belittle the character, ability, or influence of any of its other worthy inhabitants. It is not less their privilege to enjoy glorification of their own nativity, nor less their right to be proud of the fact

that they were nurtured under other than New England skies, because the Yankee cheerfully admits his own importance.

In truth, the principal points in the Yankee's favor seems to be his large influence in proportion to numbers, his force, and his ubiquity.

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